

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-23. (canceled)

24. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ A process for [[the]] treatment of tobacco leaves (Nicotiana tabacum) comprising the following steps:

a) drying and curing of the leaves;

b) extraction of dried leaves with a solvent or mixture of solvents;

c) re-drying of the extracted leaves; and

d) elimination of the ribs.

25. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ The process as claimed in claim 24, wherein the solvent is selected from methanol, ethanol, propanol, isopropanol, acetone, ethylene glycol, water or mixtures thereof; ~~possibly adjusting pH with buffers.~~

26. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ The process as claimed in claim 25, wherein the solvent is ethanol.

27. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ The process Process as claimed in claim [[26]] 25, wherein the solvent mixture is an ethanol/water mixture with a strength of between 20° and 80°.

28. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ The process as claimed in claim 27, wherein the mixture has a strength of 50°.

29. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ The process as claimed in claim 24, wherein [[the]] a weight ratio between tobacco and solvent mixture is between 1: 5 and 1: 30.

30. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ The process as claimed in claim 29, wherein the weight ratio between tobacco and solvent mixture is 1 : 16.

31. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ The process as claimed in claim 24, wherein the extraction carried out for a time of between 3 and 16 hours.

32. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ The process as claimed in claim 31, wherein the extraction carried out for 8 hours.

33. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ The process as claimed in claim 24, wherein [[the]] an extraction temperature is between 20 and 80°C.

34. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ The process as claimed in claim 33, wherein the extraction temperature is 60°C.

35. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ The process as claimed in claim 24, wherein the extraction is performed 1-5 times.

36. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ The process as claimed in claim 35, wherein the extraction carried out once.

37. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ The process as claimed in claim 24, wherein the leaves are re-dried under vacuum.

38. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ The process as claimed in claim 24, wherein the leaves are re-dried for 36-48 hours.

39. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ The process as claimed in claim 24, wherein the leaves are re-dried at the temperature of 35°C.

40. (currently amended) ~~Process~~ The process as claimed in claim 24, wherein Virginia Bright tobacco leaves are used.

41-46. (canceled)

47. (new) The process as claimed in claim 25, further comprising adjusting a pH of the solvent with buffers.